

Specification Amendments

Please replace paragraph 0017 with the following re-written paragraph:

001 It has been found according to the present invention that a lithographic patterning process carried out over active areas adjacent the laser mark area 14, e.g., an active area encompassed by circle 15 A, is improved by eliminating a step height over the laser mark area in an STI formation process according to an embodiment of the invention. For example it has been found that ~~adjacent an adjacent~~ active areas adjacent the laser mark area 14 including several die portions of the wafer, e.g., those die within circle portion A, suffer from a defocusing effect in a photolithographic process due to a laser mark step height according to prior art processes. The present invention, by eliminating the step height over the laser mark area 14, solves the defocusing problem and improves lithographic patterning resolution for die adjacent the laser mark area, e.g., within circled wafer portion A.

Please replace paragraph 0022 with the following re-written paragraph:

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Still referring to Figure 2A, a resist layer e.g., 26 is deposited and patterned according to conventional process to form an etching pattern e.g., openings 26A and 26B for forming STI trenches (active area trenches) in the silicon substrate 22 and including an arbitrary pattern at the wafer periphery overlying a wafer laser marked area 28, generally represented in cross section by an enclosed box ~~area~~ 22B.